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SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
 ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
 Psychological Warfare Division

Two leading Krefelders:

- I. A Leftist Catholic
- II. A Rightist Industrialist

(From P &amp; PW, 9 U.S. Army, dated 11 March 1945)

## I. A Leftist Catholic.

Willi ELFES, who lives at St. Tönis, 4 km from Krefeld is probably the most important German opposition leader now in our territory. A man of strong convictions and moral fervor, he has been a consistent and active opponent of Nazism, has carried on the struggle in Catholic circles and has been in close contact with the Gördeler group which made the attempt on Hitler's life July 20. Now Elfes sits in his little room in the parish house, where he hid himself when the Gestapo was after him in October, and observes American policy and behaviour with considerable dismay and not without understanding.

It is not so much the looting and the rape that bothers him (much of the looting at St. Tönis is done by the Belgian troops stationed there) — he understands that in war time soldiers cannot be expected to behave like followers of St. Francis. What troubles him, a fighting Catholic democrat, is to see (and hear about) Americans continuing Nazis in office and treating all Germans, Nazis and anti-Nazis, alike. In St. Tönis, he says, a town that contains numerous opponents of the Hitler regime, the Bürgermeister is a Nazi party member and an ex-major in the Wehrmacht. The policy of quartering troops, he says, frequently turns out to be such that the Nazis are spared and the enemies of the Hitler system are thrown out of their houses.

"Your policy," Elfes said, "is exactly like your bombing — frequently indiscriminate. When you first came here there was joy at the liberation. Now people are bitterly disappointed. Is this the behaviour of freedom-loving men, of democrats? The people here have lists of Nazis which they hoped to hand over to the American liberators, but now they keep them for themselves and hesitate to cooperate."

Elfes is an ardent Catholic with social ideals that are, to use President Roosevelt's expression, "left of center." Were it not for his religion, he would be a Socialist. As it is, he was a leading member of the Centrist party and a member of its executive committee. Elfes knew Bruening well, but, although he respects him, he considers him too weak and also too conservative. For 18 years Elfes had been editor of the WESTDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, an influential newspaper with a circulation of 200,000. He was a member of the Prussian Diet as well as of the Munchen-Gladbach city council. In 1923 he became Chief of Police (Polizei-Präsident) of Krefeld, a position from which he was thrown out by the Nazis when they came to power. To support himself, he opened a cigar store. Among his customers were bishops and leading clergy.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Before the war, his opposition to Nazism took largely religious forms. As a prominent Catholic layman, he addressed church groups and also delivered informal sermons. In 1938 he composed a new prayer which spread through the Rhineland. The prayer pled for the recognition of the human being in all his dignity, regardless of race, color, or creed. In 1944 he wrote another prayer on the subject of truth, peace, and freedom. He read it in the church at Krefeld, in defiance of the bishop who prayed for a "just peace." Elfes stood up before the congregation, shook his white hair, and exclaimed: "A just peace? How can we German Catholics ask for a just peace? If we got a just peace, then we would all be hanged — that would be justice. Let us, on the contrary, have an unjust peace, a peace that we do not deserve."

When the war came, Elfes knew it was a lost cause. Even after the victories of 1940 he stuck to his belief that Germany would be beaten. When the church bells rang out in joy at the fall of France, Elfes put on a black necktie in mourning. "Now," he said, "the dance begins". (As he was telling us this, wife wife and daughter were sitting by his side, nodding vigorously and reminding him of other expressions and incidents). For him, as father, the "dance" also began. One of his sons in the Wehrmacht, a boy with social ideals and an admiration for Russia, was executed in Denmark, apparently for "subversive" utterances (Elfes does not know the details). Another son, now 21, had been wounded 4 times: at Stalingrad, at Salerno, at Lemberg, and somewhere in Poland. He happened to be home on furlough just before the American occupation, and his father hid him in the parish. Now he is a PW.

Under the guise of representative of the Catholic MÄNNERSEELSORGE, Elfes travelled through the big Rhineland cities — Dortmund, Dusseldorf, Essen, Hamm, Paderborn — and held secret meetings with groups ranging in number from 10 to 100. They kept religious tracts before them, while they discussed peace and plans for the future. He was in contact with many Left-Catholic and Social-Democratic personalities, many of whom are friends of his. All of them, he says, are in concentration camp, with the possible exception of Severing with whom he talked at Bielefeld in 1941. Among the Left-Catholic leaders he named Jost, Letterhaus, Müller, Hermes, and Adenauer — all imprisoned now.

As early as 1941 Elfes became convinced that the military would break with the Nazi party and attempt to form a government of conservative non-Nazis. When, therefore, sometime in 1942, a representative — "Herr Müller" — of G. Gördeler, the mayor of Leipzig, came to see him about secret plans, Elfes was not surprised. On December 30, 1942, Elfes and 3 other men met "Herr Müller" at Duisberg and learned, for the first time, about the conspiracy that was being planned against Hitler. "Müller" was a pseudonym for a Catholic trade union official, a former Reichstag deputy, who travelled through the country in the guise of a business salesman and contacted certain individuals whose names he had on a secret list.

"Müller" outlined the conspiracy in general terms. He explained that a group of influential men, both Generals and politicians, were planning to kill Hitler and set up a new government. Gördeler was the civilian brains of the conspiracy; he was to become Chancellor of the new government. The military leaders included Generals Witzleben and Beck. Another important figure was Leuchner, a former Social Democratic member of the German republican government, who was to serve as the liaison man between the conspirators and labor. Leuchner's reward was to be a post in the new cabinet.

The putsch against Hitler was to take place sometime in 1943, after the German Army had suffered further defeats and public opinion had changed. They wanted to destroy the Fuehrer at a moment when his popularity was low, so as not make a martyr out of him.

"Müller" explained that Gördeler & Co. had contact with the English, through Sweden, and that the London government was more or less prepared to deal with the new set up. General Beck, "Müller" said, was ready to accept unconditional surrender and to restore all lands and areas occupied by the Nazis. The new government was to be authoritarian and military, but without the various Nazi brutalities and compulsions. The question as to whether Parliament was to be permitted or not, was left open. Apparently Gördeler, a professional civil servant, favoured it, and the Generals were cool towards the idea. Some of the higher officers, incidentally, at first toyed with the thought of setting up a monarchy under the Kronprinz, but this idea was dropped as impractical. The military government was to retain certain Nazi features, such as the DAF and the regimentation of workers. Elfes was asked to recommend certain Rhineland individuals to serve in the cabinet. He was asked whether Adensauer, the former mayor of Cologne, would be willing to accept the post of Minister of the Interior. Elfes replied that his friend Adenauer would almost certainly refuse to cooperate with a militaristic government.

Would Elfes himself, then, be willing to serve in the Gördeler administration? He said that he would like to talk it over with his friends, but that his attitude was negative. He did not like the authoritarianism of the conspiratorial group. A democrat, he wanted free elections, a free Parliament, and an uncoerced labor movement.

After discussing the plan with his friends, Elfes met "Müller" some 2 weeks later at Godesberg. His reply was that he and his friends — Left Centrists and Socialists — would cheerfully welcome the liquidation of Hitler but that they would not cooperate with militarists.

"If you, Herr Müller, succeed in killing Hitler, I would jump up and cry, 'Hoch Müller,' and immediately after, 'Down with Müller.' I would appreciate your deed as a tremendous service to Germany, but I would deplore your taking over power in the name of Generals. I would go up and down Germany and urge that the people put up monuments in your honour but that they keep power out of your hands."

In case, however, the conspiracy succeeded, Elfes and his people were prepared to take steps of their own. For this purpose he kept in touch with "Müller" and other representatives of Gördeler; they met about twice monthly and corresponded frequently in veiled terms. Elfes was thus kept informed of the progress of the conspiracy. In June, 1944, he was in Godesberg on vacation and carried with him a Proclamation to the German people. The Proclamation contained a sharp attack on Nazism and a brief outline of a new social program for Germany; it was to carry the signatures of Elfes, Hermes, Adenauer, etc.

The expected the putsch to be made in June and were making things ready. While Elfes was waiting in Godesberg, Hermes went south with a copy of the Proclamation; others were having conferences at Bonn. In the latter group were representatives of former trade unions. So far as they knew, everything was thoroughly prepared.

But nothing happened in June, and Elfes returned to Krefeld, waiting and wondering. Then came the dramatic events of July 20, and Elfes hung on the radio to find out what was what, who was caught. It was from the names mentioned on the radio that he knew the conspiracy had failed. On that day Frau Hermes, wife of Dr. Hermes, wrote him that her husband was arrested and taken to Mecklenburg. The whole group was destroyed, and soon after, Elfes was arrested. He was released in 3 weeks (fortunately for him, the Proclamation did not have any names printed on it -- "as an old policeman, I would not commit such an elementary blunder"). Early in October he was tipped off -- by Dr. Hürter, the Nazi Buergermeister of Krefeld -- that the Gestapo was after him. So he hid in the parish house at St. Tonis and grew a beard for disguise.

Elfes does not know how and why the conspiracy failed. He did, however, give us some items of information that are not generally known. For one thing, the attempt on Hitler's life took place at the Sonne, a large drill-ground, at Paderborn. For another, much of the fault for the subsequent arrests and executions lay with General Witzleben, whom Elfes characterized as "a typical German General -- that is to say, not burdened with too much brains." It seems that Witzleben kept all the confidential papers relating to the conspiracy in his personal safe; he was sure that a General's private safe would be sacrosanct. Elfes also heard that the failure of the conspiracy was due largely to the chemist who, hoping to spare the persons surrounding the Fuehrer, did not put enough dynamite in the bomb. How many people were arrested and executed, Elfes does not know. But another informant, Schauerte, a big Dusseldorf industrialist, told us that he had heard that at least 3,000 men were executed. The conspiracy was, in Schauerte's opinion, a Junker affair -- no industrialist was represented in it.

For many years Elfes has been working on plans for a new political party in Germany; the program is, in fact, past the planning stage and has been accepted by a circle of influential individuals, mainly belonging to the former Centrist party. It has the sympathy, and possibly the support of Social Democrats such as Severing. In brief, Elfes wants to establish one large labor party, composed of all "schaffende Haende" (producing-workers) in Germany. Such a party would unite Centrists with Social Democrats and also with the Communists, provided the latter were willing to give up their hostility to religion. This united labor party's platform calls for the following points: (1) immediate peace; (2) establishment of the basic freedoms of speech, assembly, publication; (3) free trade unions (4) cooperatives; (5) socialization of heavy industry; (6) socialization of banks and insurance companies; (7) partition of the big estates; (8) large-scale public works; (9) the liquidation of the Nazi criminals. On the latter point, Elfes is sorry that the Allies, and not the Germans, will do the job. He feels that the Germans should do the housecleaning themselves.

Although a Centrist and a deeply religious Catholic, Elfes has come to the conclusion that the Centrist party should not be revived and that the church should stay out of politics. He has, in fact, no high opinion of most of Germany's Catholic bishops, and he thinks that the church failed Christianity during the Nazi-Fascist crisis of the last 20 years. The church has been reactionary and pro-fascist, Elfes charges. When the Nazis destroyed Germany's labor unions, he said bitterly, the Catholic clergy rubbed their hands in glee; but when the Hitlerite began to persecute the church, then the clergy wept in self-pity. Even then the big leaders of the church, the bishops, did nothing against German fascism. The bishops' motto was: "We want no martyrs" (The Bishop of Aachen used virtually the same expression in his conversation with us). Lesser clergy, however, frequently raised their voices against the evils and violences of Nazism, and many of them are now in concentration camps. Elfes is convinced that the failure of the church to fight Nazism has cost it the future and, despite the claims of churchmen that they are "anti-Nazi" (a claim that Elfes dismisses almost contemptuously), he thinks that as a political power the Church is finished in Germany.

Elfes believes that the middle class is also "kaputt" in the Reich. It is finished as a political force because it missed its great chance under the Republic to come to terms with the workers. Instead of helping organized labor, the only solidly democratic movement in Germany, to stabilize and fortify the Republic, the bourgeoisie chose to help Hitler destroy every vestige of democratic life in Germany. Never again, Elfes thinks, will the German middle class have another chance. In the first World War, Elfes said, the Junkers lost their chance; in the second World War the bourgeoisie lost its chance. Now, by a process of historic inevitability, it is the turn of labor, or as Elfes calls it, "die schaffende Hände." He considers Germany as much a proletarian country as is the Soviet Union and believes that the two countries have a common future.

As for accepting responsibility at present, under Allied occupation, Elfes is sceptical. From the Allied radio he has gathered the conviction that Germany's future is dark. He understands the reasons and accepts the necessity for a hard policy towards the defeated Reich, but he believes it to be a mistake to deprive a whole nation of every vestige of hope. No matter how hard the conditions, the people must be given a glimmer of hope for the future; otherwise they will become totally frustrated, demoralized, and ready for any desperate remedies. If any hope for the future is offered by the Allies, then the democratic forces will gladly cooperate. Elfes does not believe that any responsible German would otherwise act as a "slave-driver" for the Allies. From what Elfes has seen and heard of MG policy (especially MG's susceptibility to the church), he is not optimistic about an Allied-supported democratic future for Germany.

The policy of unconditional surrender, he thinks, has helped the Nazis immeasurably; it has actually united a considerable part of the nation behind them. Woodrow Wilson, Elfes said, did it better; his declaration that he had no quarrel with the German people but with the Kaiser had cut the ground from under the latter. This time, however, party and nation are united, instead of being divided, by the Allied policy. Still, Elfes thinks it wise not to promise the Germany anything — it is unfortunate that it must be so, but it cannot be helped. He thinks the Germans should atone for their sins by themselves.

On the subject of the proposed partition of Germany into Allied spheres, Elfes expressed strong doubts. Partition, far from assuring peace, would actually be a threat to peace. In the first place, he argued, the United States would undoubtedly leave Europe some day; then only Germany's weak neighbors would be left to supervise the Reich. Neither Belgium, nor Holland, nor even France will be strong enough to "digest us". In the second place, Elfes said, the historic tendency throughout the world is towards large area-combinations, rather than towards splittings; therefore, a partition of Germany would be an anti-historic, reactionary step. Finally, in his opinion, the Allies could more easily control Germany from one center.

Significantly enough, Elfes was satisfied--even pleased--with the loss of East Prussia and the Eastern German areas to Russia. As a Catholic, a Westerner, and a Rhinelander, he had no love for the Prussians whose Junker leadership had brought so much misfortune to Germany. Now he had a feeling of "good riddance".

Elfes is a wiry, energetic man in his late 50's or early 60's, whose short grey imperial gives him a resemblance to Pasteur. Unlike so many Germans one encounters, he has neither servility nor over-anxiety to please the conquerors. As a fighter against nazism, he has a clear conscience and does not consider himself one of the defeated. He has self-confidence, character, and a large dose of seasoned wisdom. Properly employed by us, he could be of great service to us and to the democratic future of his country--but he has to be properly employed. He would make an ideal publisher for a German newspaper in one of the big cities.

Saul K. PADOVER

Lewis F. GITTLER

## II. A Rightist Industrialist

Dr. Paul Dornbusch, 32, considers himself and his ideas typical of the MITTELINDUSTRIE (medium-sized industry) owners. He is BETRIEBSFUEHRER and ABWEHRBEAUFTRAGTE (Director & Espionage Trustee) of his father's factories producing machinery and tools and dies for printing and embossing. For the last 6 years, these plants have been completely converted to war goods. Dornbusch is a university graduate in philosophy and economics; all his administrative and business experience has been under the Nazi system. He is cultured, intelligent, speaks excellent English, and despite a certain uneasiness and caution, spoke openly of his sympathy with National Socialism. He and his father have been members of the Nazi party since 1933, and the younger Dornbusch was one of the 35 RATSHERREN (city council members) in Krefeld.

His attitude was clear to us from the beginning when he said, "I would not like to do or say anything against my country in time of war." A member of the VOLKSPARTEI of industrialists and managers, he went into the Nazi party in '33, he said, "because he wanted to do away with the chaos of the Republic and to prevent Communism". His rabid and inordinate fear of Communism was expressed throughout; and he attempted to rationalize the actions of his industrialist group during the last 12 years by repeated references to the "overwhelming danger of Bolshevism". The MITTELINDUSTRIE people went over in a bloc to the Nazis in '33 for this reason, and the GROSSINDUSTRIE (Big Industry) a short while later because they saw enormous war profits in Hitler's armaments program. Dornbusch says he was also motivated by a desire to "soften Nazi exaggerations" such as anti-semitism, which "did not hurt Germany, but which did not help us either".

He scoffs at the idea of "Brown Bolshevism". He said; "Communism has no limitations, whereas Nazism is only a war necessity. We, our class, have a certain influence in the Nazi party. We could not have this influence under Communism; we would lose all. The Nazi party is not a party of the lower classes. They are just exploited for the aims of the nation and to secure a basis for the state's political power. Of course, we lose certain rights under the Nazi system, but we feel it is worth it". He said that when the war broke out in '39, the marriage between Nazism and the upper German middle-class became complete. "Even the stubborn ones among us entered the party or contributed all their talents toward the party and state. The Nazi party became the nation, and we recognized this. Perhaps it was a mistake, but it was a fact". The single great feature of the Nazi party was that it "prevented communism, and if the war was not lost, it would have been a great success".

Dornbusch has a contemptuous attitude toward workers. "If you give them work and feed them adequately and tell them it is communism, then they will be communist; if you feed them and tell them it is Nazism, then they will be Nazi. They will shout Heil Hitler or Heil Moscow; they have no opinion of their own; they are very easy to govern and direct; just promise them anything and give them fair conditions and they will support anything you do." As ABWEHRBEAUFTRAGTE, a factory post which observes "opposition, espionage, and sabotage" and reports them to the Gestapo, he said he had absolutely no trouble with his workers, German or foreign. 25% of his workers were Poles and Russians. There was not a single case of sabotage in 4 years. He attributes this to good treatment. Russians he considers the best and most docile foreign workers.

He described the DAF (Nazi Labor Front) as an instrument for protecting the workers against the employer. The DAF's representative, the BETRIEBSRAT who theoretically was on a par with Dornbusch, was, however, a "very reasonable friendly man" and Dornbusch was in the closest agreement with him. There was never any conflict in the slightest degree between them.

Basically, Dornbusch has not changed his ideas since the Allies have taken over. He wants no political parties, no popular elections, no mass trade unions. The Nazi system has been beneficial, and would be even better without the Nazis and their "exaggerated ideology and excesses". His ideal state would be an authoritarian one, with a hierarchy of labor and skills; political power would be based on the skilled labor aristocracy and the medium-sized industrialists as leaders--men such as himself. The guild system (DAF) would replace unions and strikes. In this connection, his ideas are remarkably similar to the views expressed to us by the Aachen industrialists around the Weltrup-Oppenhoff group who are in the civil administration under MG in Aachen today. Dornbusch vouches for it that his ideas are common among his class all over Germany. As a matter of fact, he knows Oppenhoff and Weltrup very well. Dornbusch's wife is the sister-in-law of Op de Hipt, who is the key man in the present Aachen civil administration. Dornbusch went to see Weltrup in Aachen a few days before it fell. At that time Weltrup told him he was keeping "his best man" with him to await the Americans and collaborate with them. (Weltrup was the leading munitions manufacturer of Aachen.)

Dornbusch is a Catholic, but he has little sympathy for the Centrist party or the higher Catholic clergy. They claimed to be against Nazism, but "they did nothing against the party or war" and contributed their brains and labor toward the party and nation.

He said the industrialists want a "strong nationalist regime" led by the VOLKSPARTEI and DEUTSCHNATIONAL party. Social-democrats they consider "un-German" and Communists a "menace". Industrially, Germany's future lies in medium-sized industry--textiles, building trades, transport, glass, "cuckoo clocks", handicrafts of all kinds. He admits the upper middle-classes have not suffered much during the war and have lost little as a result of the bombings. "They still have their farms, estates, large country villas, investments, and in most cases their factories which were decentralized into many small holdings." On the other hand, the lower bourgeoisie, the businessmen, have lost everything, their shops, stores, supplies, warehouses, goods, through bombings and looting and requisition.

Dornbusch claims that Germany is not a land of big industry. Big industry, MAMMOTHINDUSTRIE, was synthetically created by the Nazis for war production. But the basis of German economy is the MITTLEINDUSTRIE, factories employing between 500 and 2,000 men, producing essentially peacetime consumer goods. Dornbusch says that the great Allied bombing attacks have succeeded in decentralizing industry to such an extent that Big Industry, outside of steel, chemicals and coal, no longer exists. In 1943, the factories broke up and moved into all parts of Germany, attaching themselves to local small industries and even amalgamating their capital with the local plants.

Thus replacement of machinery and rebuilding of factories due to bombings was not difficult. For example, his main factory in Krefeld was destroyed in 1943. He built a new factory from the ground up between July and September 1943, with completely new machinery. "For those plants that were essential or near-essential to war needs, there was not the slightest difficulty in replacing worn-out or destroyed machinery."



Dornbusch and his class "expect anything" from the Allied occupation authorities. They "expect" heavy industry to be confiscated. He says that the MITTELINDUSTRIE, in order to maintain itself, needs only coal and iron and the industrialists do not care where this comes from, as long as it is made available for the minimum needs. He suggests it could be rationed from abroad, rationed in such a way that these raw materials could not find their way into any heavy industry for potential war purposes. The biggest industry and most centralized in Germany today is the chemical branch, because the Nazis yearned and planned for "autarchy" where no imports would be necessary.

Dornbusch's friends (in his house today live 10 families, among them a banker, architect, lawyer, economist, manufacturers) listened eagerly to the details of the Yalta Conference over the BBC. particularly they were interested in Churchill's statement--"peace will bring reparations, but the German people will not starve and they must be given an opportunity to work". Dornbusch asked: "Does this mean you will take our factories or our products?" Allied propaganda did however impress them with its "seriousness of trying to build a new post-war world".

Dornbusch reflects a good deal of the present Nazi propaganda line. Until the present Russian and Anglo-American offensives, he believed the Allies would be stopped, a conflict of important political proportions would break out among them, and a negotiated peace other than unconditional surrender would ensue. "Every German thought and hoped for a conflict between the Allies. And we think it will still come. It will come in Germany over Germany's future. And Germany will thus become the future battlefield between the West and East."

Dornbusch thinks this conflict is inevitable because the United States will isolate itself again; Britain is too weak to counteract Russian purposes; and France is already Communist. "That is why we continue fighting today. Because you will leave us at the mercy of the communists. And if Russia does succeed in communizing Germany, all of us, scores of my friends will either run away or we will save one bullet for each member of our family." Russia he considers a "lower culture" and Stalin a man whom one can never believe. "The prolongation of the war is due to the fear of communism."

He and his friends were amazed that MG did not enter Krefeld with an entire German civil regime completely set up, but had to go searching for a Mayor. He did not think the Allies very efficient, because things are still so confused and no one knows where they stand. He and his imagined that it all would be different.

Dornbusch, of course, has no feeling of hostility toward leading Nazis. He respects those who are Nazis "out of conviction", men "who are idealists and wanted to carry out the true Nazi principles". He sees the future as "very black" because there is "no strong man" or "strong movement" ready to replace Hitler and his movement". Again he brought up the fear of communism. If this strong man is not available, the masses will accept communism if thereby they get work and bread. Communism, as a matter of fact, is rampant even in Spain under Franco, and De Gaulle is a communist in disguise.

Although a man who shows outwardly all the amiability and respectability of a good education, wide travel (in Europe and America), and the self-assurance that comes from the habit of leadership and good living, Dornbusch could reveal no deep moral feelings. He was anxious to hear of the disastrous effects of V-1 and V-2, and when he was told of the atrocities committed by the SS and Wehrmacht in Poland, France and Russia, he exclaimed: "But why did they do it? Why kill them? We needed workers, housemaids, gardeners. We were asking for more workers all the time!"

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